

Purdue University

Purdue e-Pubs

Historical Documents of the Purdue
Cooperative Extension Service

Department of Agricultural Communication

3-1-1980

Clothing Dollar Sense

Lois M. Gotwals

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/agext>

Dollar Sense

Gotwals, Lois M., "Clothing Dollar Sense" (1980). *Historical Documents of the Purdue Cooperative Extension Service*. Paper 1024.

<https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/agext/1024>

For current publications, please contact the Education Store: <https://mdc.itap.purdue.edu/>

This document is provided for historical reference purposes only and should not be considered to be a practical reference or to contain information reflective of current understanding. For additional information, please contact the Department of Agricultural Communication at Purdue University, College of Agriculture: <http://www.ag.purdue.edu/agcomm>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

yes
New

CLOTHING DOLLAR SENSE

by Lois M. Gotwals, Extension Clothing Specialist

Is your closet full of unwearable garments which need cleaning, mending or no longer fit? If so, plan before you shop, and become a better wardrobe manager.

PLAN YOUR ATTACK

To build a workable wardrobe — one that looks right when worn to all the places you go and that makes you feel comfortable — you need a plan of attack. First, take a critical look at the clothes you have. Then, decide which garments can be repaired or updated and which must be replaced. Be realistic. Your plan can be ruined if you decide to remodel or mend everything you own without having the necessary skill and time; or if you decide to purchase more clothing than your budget can handle.

CHECK YOUR INVENTORY

Before you plan the clothing you want to purchase, take a look at the clothing you have. Begin with a try-on inventory. As you put on each garment, ask yourself, "Do I really like this?" Pile garments on the bed, making three piles — "Wear," "Mend and redo" and "Discard." Accessorize as you go along — ties, jewelry, scarves, etc. — to see if replacements or additions are needed. Would new accessories update a garment? The cost of accessories is not small, but they may be cheaper than a new outfit, especially if they can be worn with several garments.

Bag your "Discard" pile and give it to a friend, your favorite charity, or sell it through a resale shop. As you bag these garments, ask yourself why you wore or did not wear each garment.

Now, categorize the wearable items according to their desired use, realizing that some clothes can be worn for a number of occasions and activities. For example, a coat and basic shoes may be suitable for

work or school as well as for parties. The following clothing groupings may help you evaluate your clothes:

- work, school and/or community activities clothes
- sport and leisure wear (polished)
- sport and exercise wear (active)
- gardening, farming and painting clothing
- party and dinner clothes
- accessories
- underwear and hosiery
- sleepwear and robes

After grouping your clothing according to your activities, you should be able to decide what garments are needed in your wardrobe and to estimate the cost of each item. Compare this total amount with what you can spend on clothes. If it is more than you can afford, rank what you want in order of importance and buy only those with the highest priority. You may be able to reduce costs by waiting for sales or by sewing garments yourself. Long range planning can also help you stagger purchases. You don't need to purchase shoes for the whole family at one time or winter coats for everyone this fall.

First, decide on a color scheme, not necessarily one color, but a color group or a combination of two or three colors. This way everything, including your accessories, will go with everything else in the wardrobe. No one can start with a whole new wardrobe, but try to make every new purchase fit your wardrobe color plan.

COORDINATE AND SAVE

A workable wardrobe doesn't necessarily mean a lot of clothes. You need clothes that work together or a few, well-selected clothes that combine and seem like many outfits.

Choose simple, basic styles that can be changed with accessories or other garments to look dressy,

tailored or casual. Avoid unusual or high-style in clothes which will be worn often and over a long period of time.

Choose accessories that will go with several different outfits — a pair of shoes and a purse that will go with most or all of your clothes. Usually, these basic accessories are simple in design and often in solid colors.

Purchase coordinated separates that can be mixed and matched with various other garments. For example: choose a jacket, pants, shirt, and skirt and another top which can all be interchanged for an endless variety of looks. Look for versatile garments that can be worn for more than one season or for most of the year. If you wear one suit year-round, it is wise to buy the best quality you can afford.

When shopping for a coat, think of it as another piece of your total wardrobe. It must work with what you wear underneath and look good with your basic accessories. Your best coat buy will be one that is versatile enough to top skirts, pants and dresses.

SHOP FOR QUALITY

You have your own standard of quality which you must determine for each garment in relationship to the amount of money you plan to spend. Quality is the degree of excellence in fabric, cut and workmanship which a garment possesses. Generally, you will not find top quality in every garment feature — fabric, cut and workmanship — unless the garment is relatively expensive.

FABRIC

The way a fabric feels, its color, and its overall look are important. In fact, they will probably be the first things you notice about the garment. However, color and overall look do not always assure quality, long wear or minimum care.

Choose easy-care garments which can be laundered or dry cleaned frequently. Those garments requiring hand-washing, special handling by a professional dry cleaner, or frequent pressing, take more time and upkeep which may mean that they are seldom worn.

By law, each garment must have a permanent care label which states the recommended care instructions. This label must be permanently attached to the garment and be readable for the life of the garment. The instructions must clearly state how to care for the garment without using promotional language. It should not state that the garment must be dry-cleaned only when it can, in fact, be washed.

The fiber content of the garment must be stated on a permanent or removable label. The label must specify, by percentage, the amount of each fiber present in the fabric, listing the highest percentage first. The label must state the generic name of the fiber while the listing of the trade name is optional. Thus, if the fabric is 65% Dacron polyester and 35% Avril rayon, the percentages and the generic names

— polyester and rayon — must be listed; only the terms Dacron and Avril are optional. Each generic group of fibers has certain characteristics which will give you clues as to how the fabric will perform.

The garment will also be treated with certain finishing processes and often these finishes are listed on the label. The finish will be identified by a trade name and a short description of its function.

CUT

Examine the garment to determine if each section is cut so that it will set properly on the body. The skirt should hang straight and not swing toward either side, flared panels should all flare evenly, and side seams should hang vertically on the body, swinging neither toward the front or back. The collar should roll so that the points are flat (not curled upward) and identical. Sleeves should not twist around the arm. Pant legs should hang straight with a vertical thread of the fabric following the leg crease. Front tabs and flaps should be cut so that the threads of the fabric follow the center front of the garment or are cut on the bias. Whole garments or sections of garments which are cut askew may hang more crooked after repeated launderings. Frequently these garments become sales items.

The coloration and matching of garment pieces are also signs of quality. Newer printing techniques and multiple layer cutting make it possible to have a garment cut from different print or dye lots of fabric. Observe whether all sections of the garment have the same degree of color and whether the nap or print is cut in the same direction. Such garments are often sold on sale as seconds with the label of the manufacturer removed.

The process of matching plaids and stripes increases the cost of the garment because of the increased labor and fabric involved in cutting and sewing. Thus, bias sections may be used to reduce the cost of matching fabric. This does not reduce the quality of the garment, but it does help to hold down production costs.

WORKMANSHIP

Shortcuts in construction show up in the finished garment in terms of puckered and raveled seams, ragged buttonholes, uneven hems, etc. Many of these flaws can be repaired; however, they are signs of lower quality which should be considered before purchasing a garment.

Seam allowances should be generous, especially if you need to have the garment enlarged. If the fabric ravels, the seams must be finished, otherwise the seams will begin to fray after a few launderings.

Seams should be even and flat, and darts should be stitched with a tapered point. Machine stitchings should be secured at the ends so that they will not come unstitched. Broken and loose stitches, dangling threads, puckered seams and puckered darts — all indicate poor quality.

The hem should be sufficiently wide so that it can be let out and be in good proportion with the width and flare of the garment. The stitches which hold the hem in place should not show on the outside. To judge the quality of the seam tape at the top of the hem, run your fingernail across it. If the threads separate, the tape is loosely woven and will probably need to be replaced after a few launderings. Excess fullness around the hem should be controlled by easing or shrinking to give a flat, smooth outer appearance.

Buttonholes should be closely stitched and they should follow the threads of the fabric. Interfacing should give the button and buttonhole area needed firmness and added durability. Bound buttonholes are rarely found even on very expensive clothing, so the lack of bound buttonholes is not a sign of poor quality. Machine-made buttonholes should be closely stitched with no loose threads. Buttonholes and buttons should be placed close enough so that the garment (providing it fits correctly) does not gap.

Zippers should be concealed as much as possible unless they are intended to serve as a decorative feature or are sewn into a soft knit fabric. Fly openings should be smooth and interfaced so that they will not stretch out of shape.

Tailored waistbands should be flat, even in width, and firm. The juncture where the waistband meets or laps should be even in width, smooth and as inconspicuous as possible. Elastic and drawstring casings are used as waistbands today to reduce labor costs and provide more flexibility of fit.

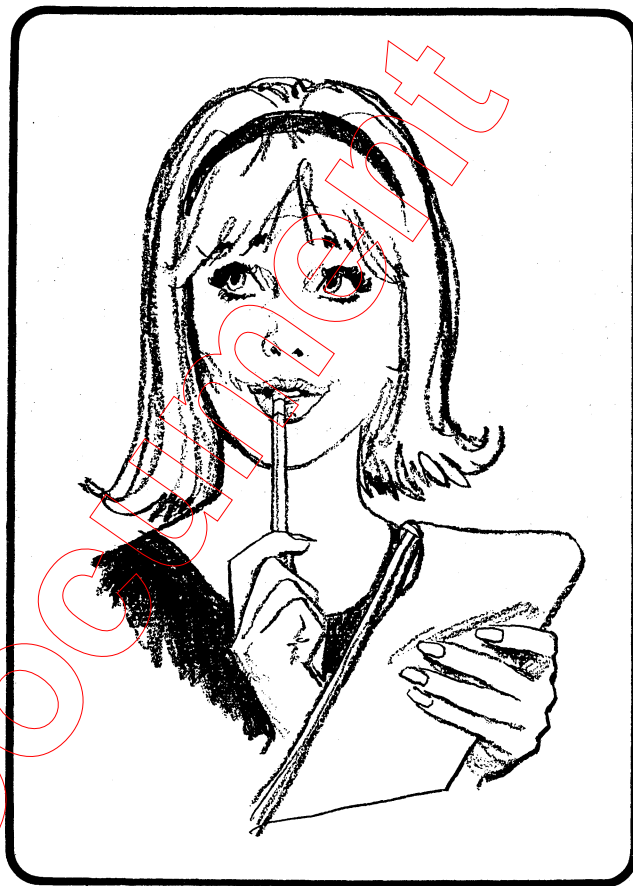
Waistline seams should be stayed with ribbon seam binding or a strip of firmly woven, lightweight fabric. For utmost smoothness, stays should be stitched after the waistline seam has been sewn; however, to reduce labor costs, stays are sometimes stitched in as the waistline seam is sewn.

Sleeves should provide ample width for the upper arm, and if full length, cover the wristbone when the arm is bent. The curve of the armhole should be smooth and gradual with the fullness in the sleeve cap evenly distributed. The crosswise threads of the fabric above the elbow should be parallel to the floor and the lengthwise threads should hang straight from the end of the shoulder to the elbow.

Collars should be set smoothly on the garment and the points should be identical and an even distance from the center front. Interfacing should be used to give the collar needed support and firmness without puckering. Undercollars should not be visible.

Lining is not necessary in every garment, but it helps in some. Straight wool skirts are likely to stretch and bag across the seat if they are not lined. Some thin, loosely woven fabrics cannot hold their shape without an underlining. Plus, a lining adds a finished look and warmth to a winter coat. A lining should lie smoothly inside the outer fabric without pulling or bunching. If used in a coat or jacket, the lining should have a $\frac{3}{4}$ inch deep, vertical back pleat

to provide enough ease across the shoulders. Linings should be firmly attached to the outer fabric at the shoulder, sleeve and waistline seams so that the lining will not droop and show below the garment.



WATCH YOUR CLOTHING INVESTMENT

To judge quality, you must evaluate the fabric cut and workmanship along with the style, color and price. Trade-offs are sometimes necessary. If style is more important to you than workmanship, then repairs, reduced durability, or a higher price may be the results of your decision. For the same dollars, someone else might purchase workmanship and better fabric with less style. The decision is yours.

To help you determine necessary trade-offs, consider how long you will wear each garment before you buy it. "Cost-per-wearing" is what watching your clothing investment is all about. Here's how it works. An inexpensive blouse may seem like a bargain, but if you only wear it five times, the cost-per-wearing could be considerably more than that for a more expensive blouse (a considerable investment) you will wear once a week, five months a year, for the next three years — that's 60 wearings. These blouses are both washable, but if one requires dry-cleaning, that cost must also be included. Estimate how often you might wear some garments and figure the cost-per-wearing to see how it can help you manage your clothing dollars.

ENJOY YOUR CLOTHES

Planning and acquiring a workable wardrobe is generally a blending of economic and aesthetic principles. Not only must you balance your clothing budget and purchase the "best" garment for the price, but you should enjoy what you buy and feel comfortable in your clothes.

What kind of person you are — your character, temperament, interests and lifestyle — plus the size and shape of your body affects the clothing you need and buy. Therefore, to be well-dressed is to know yourself and to purchase clothing which reflects the "inner you." Clothes which do not reflect the inner you or are not becoming, generally hang in the closet unworn. What is more wasteful of your clothing dollars? Thus, plan ahead and give your clothing needs some thought, shop wisely and enjoy each clothing purchase.



REFERENCES:

Feather, Betty. Ready-To-Wear Quality Signals, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri, 1977.

McIntyre, Margie. Clothing Sense Saves Dollars, Number 794, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Georgia College of Agriculture, Athens, Georgia, 1976.

Your Clothing Dollar, Money Management Institute, Household Finance Corporation, Chicago, 1978.

The activity which is the subject of this report was supported in part by the U.S. Office of Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare. However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Office of Education, and no official endorsement by the U.S. Office of Education should be inferred.
